

Appln. No. 10/579,013
Amendment dated November 14, 2008
Response to Office Action of August 21, 2008

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The August 21, 2008 Office Action and the Examiner's comments have been carefully considered. In response, claims are cancelled and amended, the specification is amended, and remarks are set forth below in a sincere effort to place the present application in form for allowance. The amendments are supported by the application as originally filed. Therefore, no new matter is added.

SPECIFICATION

In the Office Action the Examiner objects to the disclosure because the Examiner states that the claims are referred to in the body of the specification on page 1 of the application. In response, the specification is amended to remove the language objected to by the Examiner. In view of the amendment of the specification, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to the specification are respectfully requested.

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CLAIM OBJECTIONS

In the Office Action claim 3 is objected to because of the wording "are envisaged." In response, claim 3 is cancelled, thereby rendering the objection to claim 3 moot.

Claims 3, 8-10 and 12-15 are objected to as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. In response, the claims are amended in a sincere effort to overcome this objection.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to the claims are respectfully requested.

MEANS PLUS FUNCTION LANGUAGE IN CLAIMS

In the Office Action the Examiner states that the wording of claim 3, specifically "means for positioning" is described in the specification, for example on page 5, as including any desired means able to perform the function. Therefore, the Examiner states that he has not accorded "means plus function" status to the limitation "means for positioning."

The undersigned has studied the present application as filed, and specifically page 5 where the Examiner indicates that "means for positioning" is described as including any desired means able to perform the function.

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This is not in fact the case, and the means for positioning is specifically explained on pages 3-5 of the present application. Applicant respectfully invites the Examiner to specifically point to the language in the specification which states that the "means for positioning" includes any desired means able to the function.

PRIOR ART REJECTIONS

In the Office Action, claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over USP 4,042,207 (Nehrlich et al.) or EP087520 (Waltensphul et al.).

In response, limitations from claims 2, 3 and 4 have been incorporated into claim 1 to more clearly define the present claimed invention over the cited references.

Independent claim 1 now includes the feature "means for positioning the lifting frame in relation to the holding element during the adjusting of the same and prior to introducing the guide element into the guide groove," previously recited in claim 3.

Nehrlich et al. teach a gate-type sliding valve for the outlet of a casting ladle which is provided with support arms on which is pivotally mounted a hydraulically actuated piston and cylinder.

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Waltensphul et al. teach a sliding closure unit which includes a slider element (25) with a push rod (27) guided in a slider housing (21, 22). By means of a coupling (40), the push rod is connectable to the drive rod (32) of a linear drive (30), and attached to the housing by means of a holding structure (28). The coupling (40) is designed in such a way that, with the linear drive pushed into the holding structure (28), it automatically couples with the drive rod and is pushed against the slider element. Similarly, it automatically decouples when the linear drive is taken out of the holding structure.

Neither Nehrlich et al. nor Waltensphul et al. disclose, teach or suggest a device for actuating a sliding closure applied to a vessel containing molten metal once the vessel has been positioned on a ladle rotating tower, with a piston/cylinder unit that can be introduced into a holding element of the sliding closure which includes a drive shaft that can be coupled to a slide rod of the sliding closure, and means for positioning the lifting frame in relation to the holding element during the adjusting of the same and prior to introducing the guide element into the guide groove. This feature enables a positioning of the lifting frame which has greater accuracy and larger tolerances than the prior art devices. Waltensphul et al. do not teach an automatic positioning of the cylinder which includes means for

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positioning the lifting frame as recited in claim 1. The automatic positioning of the cylinder is not disclosed, taught or suggested in Nehrlich et al. In Nehrlich et al. the cylinder has to be moved in three different directions, in particular the vertical direction, the horizontal direction and swivelled so that the collar (31) of the piston rod (23) can be coupled by inserting into the slot arm (33) of the arm (32).

In view of the foregoing, claim 1 is in form for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Claims 5-16 are either directly or indirectly dependent on claim 1 and are patentable over the cited references in view of their dependence on claim 1, and because the references do not disclose, teach or suggest each of the limitations set forth in the dependent claims.

None of the other references of record close the gap between the present claimed invention as defined by claims 1 and 5-16. Therefore, claims 1 and 5-16 are in form for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

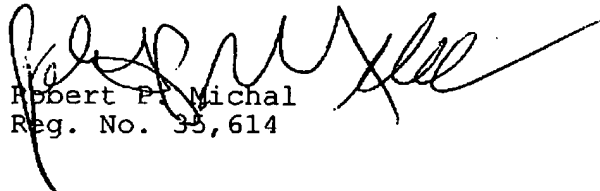
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Entry of the amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of the application to issue are respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,



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